

# Wemen to Wentworth

## Day Five Thursday 6 February 2003

Kevin's swag zip ripped open, announcing to everyone that a new day was dawning.

Away by 0840, twenty minutes earlier than usual. Joshua jumped into 148 with Graham. It was now Barb's boat. She and Keith had concluded negotiations earlier. Everyone was happy. Barb got a cheap boat (\$100) and Keith didn't have to transport it back to Perth after the expedition.

Cruising at 42kph this morning. Lots of houseboats and about ten old paddle steamers. Lots of pelicans, swans and ducks.

Graham and Joshua performed a beautiful slide over a sandbank without losing any speed right



Packing up after lunch at Karadoc

next to Fred and Keith. Full of confidence, they pulled off a few more throughout the morning. Keith was enjoying his ride with Fred – "an armchair ride, smooth, no bouncing and fairly quiet".

Lots of wildlife – emus and kangaroos. Thirty four kilometers after the start the Boat Crew passed through Retail Cutting. This formation has shortened the river by about eight kilometers.

The reason for the inexplicable slow pace on the water was today revealed. It appears that a tennis ball was being thrown from boat to boat with about a 70% success rate – necessitating many turn arounds to retrieve it.

Ian noted that he saw heaps of eagles today. Curiously, others noted the absence of eagles but the preponderance of pelicans.



Approaching Mildura

Lunch at Karadoc. As one would expect, the Support Crew were by now expert at preparing lunch.



Entering Mildura Lock



Inside Mildura Lock



Inside Mildura Lock



Todd and Leah

Cameron was suffering increasingly from his infected leg and it would be necessary to get some expert attention. On arrival at Mildura later in the day, Kevin took him to the Mildura Hospital for treatment. On return to Perth Kevin, Keith, Todd and Ian all had problems with cuts healing, despite 'good practice' in their treatment.

Although the weather was hot, it was OK in the boats. But on the approach to Lock 11 at Mildura the crews had to comply with the 4 knot limit and, with no breeze, it was uncomfortably hot.

Through the lock and it was only a short run to Apex Park for fuel.

### Mildura

On the way to Mildura, "the oasis in the desert", the river passes the mallee wilderness of Hattah Kulkyne National Park.

The rural city of Mildura is the hub of Sunraysia – known for its agriculture, horticulture and viticulture.



Wentworth Camp





Todd showering at Wentworth

It was very hot. On both land and water, crews were happy to get moving and cool down.

### Wentworth

Wentworth is the gateway to the outback. It is located at the junction of Australia's two largest and mightiest rivers, the Murray and the Darling. Its first settlers were overlanders who camped at the junction in the 1840s.

It was named after the N.S.W. explorer and politician William Charles Wentworth in 1859.

A short time later the Boat Crew sped beneath the Abbotsford Bridge and on to Wentworth only 16 kilometers away.

At Wentworth the Lockkeeper helped make special arrangements with the staff at Lock 9 downriver so the Boat Crew would be able to get through.

The run from the Lock to the town boat ramp was only a few hundred meters downriver but it was long enough for Fred to trial an old steel chopper. It bumped up his speed to 49kph.

The quandary facing the expedition was discussed. It was considered to be too far to reach the next guaranteed access point – Lock 8 (Lock 9 was accessible only from the south side – a trip of more than one hundred kilometers). Without permission to enter Moorna Station, the Support Crew would be unable to RV with the Boat Crew before then.



The camp at Wentworth



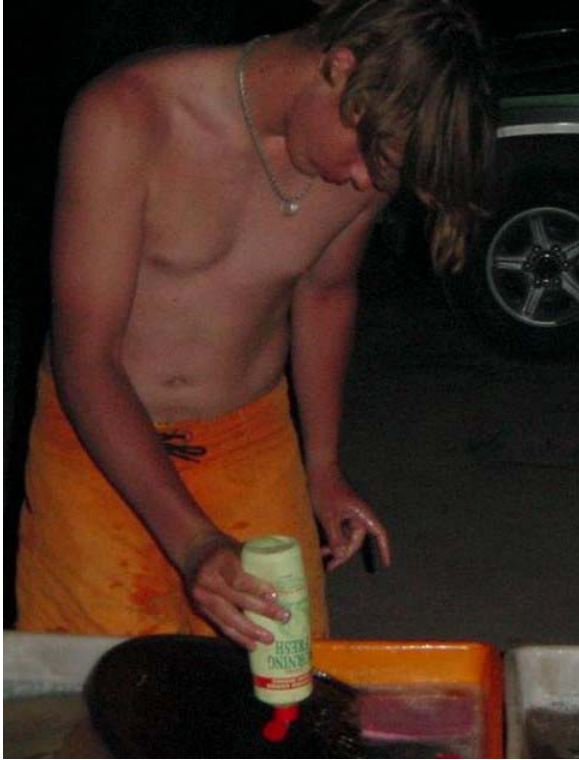
Filling in diary notes at Wentworth

Kim drove into the town to telephone the owners of Moorna Station for permission to camp/refuel the boats. He was unable to contact anyone. On his return to where the boats were parked at the river's edge more discussion ensued and the decision made to stay at Wentworth. The Lockkeeper at Lock 9 was informed.

The Wentworth boat ramp was a great campsite - shady, level, free of pests, easy access to the boats and a great view.

With humid weather, watermelon, Cajun crumbed chicken and a leafy salad one could be excused for imagining they were in the Deep South of the US.

Kevin worked tirelessly getting water, washing dishes and tidying up. The solar shower got another major workout. Later in the night, the generator ran out of fuel, the lights went out and (predictably) Graham fell off his chair.



Graham washing up

After two days of being ragged over his acute bird identification skills, Ian invoked the "48 hour rule" which he just made up and goes something like "enough's enough".

### **European Carp (Cyprinus carpio)**

Carp are a big headache for Australia's largest river system, the Murray-Darling. They have been called the 'rabbits of the water'.

Since they were released in 1872 they have spread extensively in south-eastern Australia and the Murray-Darling Basin, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. Female carp can produce 1.5 million eggs a year.

Carp undermine banks, silt up waterways and compete with native fish for food and habitat.

### **Wedge-tail Eagle (Aquila Audax)**

Australia's largest eagle is largely a carrion feeder across the continent although live prey, rabbits, small macropods and birds are also taken by diving or rapid pursuit.

Wedge-tail Eagles have a long history of human persecution mainly as a result of alleged stock predation. Research has shown the accusation to be largely unfounded.

They construct very large stick nests, often low to the ground if there are no sturdy trees.

'Wedgies' have a wingspan in excess of 2 meters and a feeble yelp and squeal.